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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the effect of an alternative teacher preparation program on participants' attitudes and beliefs regarding personal attributes and characteristics they possessed when they were admitted to the program. The study examined programmatic features that interns considered influential in contributing to their success as teachers. Participants were graduates of a graduate-level preservice program within the Alliance for Catholic Education who had been rated as effective teachers by supervisors, mentors, and principals via a mailed survey. They completed an 11-question, open-ended, mailed survey that discussed influences on their success in the program. Questions addressed: public persona, personal and professional growth, beliefs about learning, self-confidence, teaching skills, effect on student performance and achievement, support structures, achievement motivation, idealism versus realism, beliefs about teaching, the value of modeling respect and honesty for students, and recognition of the value, demands, and standards of teaching. Data analysis showed four major clusters: a learning frame of mind with a healthy self-concept, support from learning communities, thinking from the learner's frame of reference, and the emerging professional. The program had a profound positive impact on attitudes and beliefs and significantly influenced persona. Many program features contributed to participants' success as teachers. Participants named support by school administrators, mentors, and university supervisors as invaluable. (Contains 37 references.) (SM)

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The Efficacy of Teacher Education in an Alternative Program

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Purpose:

To determine what effect an alternative teacher preparation program had on participants' attitudes and beliefs in relation to the personal attributes and characteristics the participants possessed when they were admitted to the program. We wanted to determine the programmatic features that interns found were the most influential in contributing to their success as teachers. We also wanted to learn the effect field support structures had on those intern teachers who responded to our survey.

Background:

For the past four years the University of Portland School of Education has participated in a unique alternative teacher education effort. The program is entitled the Alliance for Catholic Education (ACE). It is a collaborative effort between the University of Portland, the University of Notre Dame, and the National Catholic Education Association. The three main tenets of the program are faith, teaching, and service. We have been involved in designing and implementing this experimental, field-based Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) degree program. The primary intent of the model is to prepare recent college graduates in multiple content areas to become teachers in Catholic diocese schools in the southwestern and southern regions of the United States. Secondarily, the program provided teacher licensure for all the participants who successfully complete the program. Intern teachers must commit to two years of service as teachers in the diocesan school to which they are assigned. These aspiring teachers experience two summers of intensive course work which is supplemented with a clinical, supervised teaching experience in their own classrooms during the remainder of the two academic years. Interns receive direct assistance and support from their principals, a person who is identified as the mentor teacher at each school, and a clinical supervisor from the University of Portland.

Because the ACE program has only been in operation for four years, we have confined our study to the data from the first two cohort groups (ACE I and ACE II) who have completed the program. By the summer of year three, fifty-nine intern teachers have graduated with MAT

Theoretical Framework:

Although most people recognize that classroom experience has the greatest role to play in the learning process of new teachers (Jackson, 1986; Goodlad, 1994; Haberman, 1995), the focus of this research initiative was to determine the programmatic features and delivery models the teacher interns in our program found most valuable in preparing them to become effective teachers.

Experiential based, the coursework followed best practice standards (Zemelman, S., Daniels, H. & Hyde, A., 1993) both in content and modeling by faculty. The essence of any teaching process is the designing of environments inside which the student can interact (Dewey, 1916). Appropriate instructional models of teaching are patterns or plans that can be used to design face-to-face teaching in classrooms or tutorial settings and which shape instructional materials (i.e. books, videos, computers) and curricula. Each model guides instruction and ranges from simple, direct procedures to complex strategies that require students to gradually and skillfully construct knowledge. As students acquire information, ideas, skills, values, ways of thinking, and means of expressing themselves, they are also learning how to learn. How a teacher conducts instruction has a large impact on students' abilities to construct their own knowledge schema (Marlowe & Page, 1998). Successful teachers are not simply charismatic or persuasive, rather, they present powerful cognitive and social tasks to students and teach students how to make productive use of them (Marlowe & Page, 1998). For example, although learning to introduce a lesson clearly and knowledgeably is highly desirable, it is the learner who does the learning; successful teachers teach students how to extract information in a lesson and make it their own. Effective learners draw information, ideas, and wisdom from teachers and use resources effectively (Joyce & Weil, 1992). Delivery models (Showers, 1985) are based on intense and ongoing multi-level communication methods involving interns and school based mentors, school principals, University of Portland faculty, and peer interactions.

Of particular interest to us is the small body of research which indicates that most successful teachers attribute their instructional success to their personal and professional growth and/or their own personal attributes (Lieberman, 1988;, Maeroff, 1988; Darling-Hammond, 1989,

Featherstone, 1993; Sergiovanni, 1994). In fact, Featherstone (1993) found that successful beginning teachers must develop a "public persona" in their new professional positions. Beginning teachers often find their teaching experience has transformed their personal and professional lives (Featherstone, 1993; Marsick, 1999). We wondered if many of those ACE intern teachers who we classified as "effective" (see Appendix A) would have similar experiences in their own personal and professional lives?

Although there has been more study about the effect support structures (mentor teachers, principals, colleagues, University faculty, and program staff) have had on the teaching success of beginning teachers (Krupp, 1984; Showers, 1985; Galvez-Hjornevik, 1986; Daloz, 1986; Maeroff, 1988; Huling-Austin, Odell, Ishler & Kay, 1989; Little, 1990; Ackley & Gall, 1992; Haberman, 1995), we wanted to know what effect mentor teachers and close clinical supervision had on the ACE intern teachers.

ACE Intern Teachers and the Literature about Beginning Teachers:

A number of researchers have examined the relationship between beginning teachers' characteristics and dispositions (Pratt, 1986; Flaitz, 1987; Brookhart & Freeman, 1992; Ackley & Arwood, 1999), the perceived problems of beginning teachers (Veenman, 1984), and the knowledge base that beginning teachers should know and practice to be effective (Reynolds, 1992). Another groups of researchers have begun to examine field experienced based, reform, and alternative teacher education programs to determine what programmatic features may be more successful (Howey & Zimpher, 1989; Goodlad, 1994; Sears, Marshall & Otis-Wilborn, 1994; Haberman, 1995; Bullough & Baughman, 1997). We wanted to find how and if our MAT program and the ACE intern teachers compared and contrasted to this growing body of inquiry about beginning teachers and their professional education.

With a program that is centered on a supervised field experience, data gained may provide useful insights into such a delivery model. We developed a survey instrument that we sent to those members of the first two graduating classes of the Alliance for Catholic Education MAT program whom we rated as "effective" teachers (see Appendix B).

Method:

This qualitative descriptive study sent an eleven question open-ended survey to selected program graduates. Participants had excelled in coursework and were identified as "effective teachers" by the university supervisor, mentor teacher, and school principal. An effective teaching rating was determined by the University supervisor's, mentor teacher's, and principal's subjective and objective ratings, of the intern teachers teaching performance in the areas of classroom management, student-teacher interactions, and students active engagement in learning.

The questionnaire (Appendix A) was distributed (mailed with permission of Dean) by the postal service to 51 individuals identified by mentor teachers, principals and university supervisors as effective teachers. Each questionnaire was mailed as a package composed of a cover letter, confidentiality statement, informed consent form, and a return envelope with postage (Appendix B).

The cover letter identified the purpose of the questionnaire, the time required to complete the survey and asked respondents to have the completed forms returned to by January 30, 1998. This allowed more than four weeks for the participants to complete the questionnaire. A phone number where the researchers could be reached was included in the letter if further information was required by the participants. The letter also acknowledged in advance our appreciation for the individuals participating in the study.

The first seven questions on the survey included a Likert type scale followed by open-ended questions for descriptive elaboration. A 10 point scale used a 1 to indicate low or no agreement with the question, to a 10 indicating high agreement, or showing strong support for a measurable influence on/by participants' success in the program. Although the scale was used, the primary focus was the descriptive open-ended responses to each question. These elaboration's provided opportunities for participants to add more information and/or reflect on topics that were of interest/concern to them.

The Likert data (first seven questions) were examined using standard, descriptive statistical techniques. The open-ended part of the questions asked participants to "describe why" they had answered the question in the manner they responded. All eleven open-ended responses were analyzed by qualitative coding methods. Concepts from individual questions served as code descriptors from which response quotations were documented. From analysis of the coding emerged patterns and then clusters. (Miles & Huberman, 1994) Coding, pattering and clustering analysis was performed individually and with qualitative software, Nudist4. Tables are provided which display the survey statistical responses with supportive codes from the first qualitative review. The statistical data and codes were then analyzed for emerging patterns. As the patterning displayed clear results and systematic clustering appeared. Clusters were distributed into relational Clusters which provide the rich and distinguished view of how much influence the ACE-MAT program had on each participant, to what extent the participants' own personality and character influenced, or did not influence, and their success in the program and as a classroom teacher.

Data Analysis:

Two distinct statistical techniques were employed to analyze the data collected. First is the use of measures of central tendancy. Second was a naturalistic qualitative analysis of the text using coding categories. Coding methods included pencil and paper and a computer program called *Nud-ist 4*. Each method read text, drawing out concept sets, context situations, perspectives, and identified patterns, word associations and produced multiple "locating intersections of concept sets" and other meaningful responses in the textual material. Each question is identified and results displayed by numeric response and supported by participant quotations.

Findings:

Survey Questions

1. **To what extent have you developed a public persona that you did not have prior to your participation in the MAT program?**

   Score means: Group A = 6.9, Group B = 6.8. Group A and B rated the program influence as useful. This rating indicates many felt they entered the program with a well defined persona

Code: Public Persona

Participant responses:

"Graduating from college and entering the professional arena would have served to force me into more of the public light to some degree, but I feel that the development of my PUBLIC PERSONA was certainly enhanced by the MAT program."

"I think that any teacher, by nature of his or her work, develops a PUBLIC PERSONA."

"While the MAT didn't necessarily provide the genesis of a PUBLIC PERSONA, it played a significant part in developing it."

"I feel that I had a PUBLIC PERSONA prior to studies in the MAT."

Finds in 11 out of 20 documents, = 55%.

2. To what extent do you believe that you have grown personally and professionally as a result of your participation in the program.

Score means: Group A = 8.5; Group B = 8.8. Both Group A and B rated the program as having a very strong influence on them personally and professionally.

Code: Personal & Professional

Participant responses:

"In both my PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL lives, the MAT experience has taught me that there is a great body of knowledge, which has been well thought and researched, to which I can go for answers to many questions."

"Where do I begin? Teaching is the most difficult thing I've ever done and requires a variety of PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL skills. The combination of teaching and living in community fostered personal and professional development. In order to survive in the classroom, I had to grow, as a person and as a professional."

"The program provided one with the opportunity to reflect in a serious and critical fashion on my successes and failures as a teacher. This helped me to build on my strengths and work on my weaknesses in a way that led to significant PERSONAL AND ROFESSIONAL growth."

"The program has definitely had a strong impact on both my PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL development. There are several reasons for this. The nature of the program was very much "out of the frying pan and into the fire," which forced me to grow rather quickly!"

** Indicates the number of respondents responding (a whole number and percentage) to the question and how many responded.

"I actually changed on personality tests from an 'introvert' to an 'extrovert.'"

++ Finds in 4 out of 20 online documents, = 20%

3. To what extent has your teaching experience challenged your conceptions/ideas about learning?

Score means: Group A = 8.4, Group B = 7.5. Group A rated the program as having a very strong influence. Group B rated the program as having a strong influence. Numerically the difference between groups is significant. Although the ratings are both strong, Group A noted some qualities that apparently caused greater challenge and growth.

Codes: Teaching Experience; Learning

Participant responses:

"Before teaching my conceptions/ideas about learning were based on my experience as a learner. My TEACHING EXPERIENCE broadened my view of the many styles and modalities of a variety of learners. The teaching experience makes one reflective about learning which I was not prior to the experience."

"I think my TEACHING EXPERIENCE really changed the way I view students, thus my ideas about learning. I was able to see the frustration and struggles involved in learning, as well as, the many other aspects of children's lives that many serve as inhibitors to learning - for they may have much more immediate issues to deal with outside of school."

"Before my TEACHING EXPERIENCE itself, I viewed students more or less as "sponges" of the teachers knowledge. However, my experience has altered my conceptions somewhat in that now I see the importance of leading students towards a discovery of concepts and of building upon what they already know. But, in some ways, they still act as sponges."

"I've realized that LEARNING occurs in many ways... thus the challenges of a teacher."

"Total number of text units found = 5

4. **To what extent do you believe that your own self-confidence has contributed to your success as a teacher?**

Score means: Group A = 8.5, Group B = 8.8. For the area of own self-confidence contributing to teaching success both groups rated themselves as very strongly influenced.

Code: Self

Participant responses:

** Indicates the number of respondents responding (a whole number and percentage) to the question and how many responded.

"I feel that I gained a stronger confidence in mySELF. I seem to be a stronger public speaker and am not afraid to speak out on views in which I have strong opinions."

"I think in the first few months I lacked a great deal of SELF-confidence, but as I became more involved as a teacher I know my own self-confidence grew. I had to believe in mySELF to be able to teach every day, but I also needed other people believing in me as well. That was the beauty of the MAT program."

"Confidence is very important when teaching others. You must believe in yourSELF in order that others will believe you. The program makes you confident with the skills and tools you possess. A confident, but not cocky, teacher will be effective - (of course that is only one factor necessary) but without confidence teaching would be a struggle."

Finds in 19 out of 20 online documents, = 95%

5. To what extent do you believe the MAT program provided you with the skills necessary to be an effective teacher?

Score means: Group A = 8.1; Group B = 8.3. For the area of MAT program providing skills necessary to be an effective teacher both groups rated the programs as very strongly influencing

Code: Skill

Participant responses:

"The MAT program did an excellent job of defining the SKILLs of an effective educator. The program exposed me to the academic research evaluating different approaches and techniques based on effectiveness."

"Enhancement! Direction! Focus! Resources! Discipline! Classroom Management! Knowledge! Learning Disabilities! I believe there are natural born teachers, but without sharpening their SKILLs and giving them direction they won't succeed - the MAT provides skill to enhance and be effective!"

"The MAT definitely provided me with necessary SKILLs to be an effective teacher, but I've come to realize that experience also provides skills that can't be learned in a curriculum. The MAT probably provided me with as much as was possible for someone like myself who simply lacked experience."

++ Finds in 16 out of 20 online documents, = 80%

** Indicates the number of respondents responding (a whole number and percentage) to the question and how many responded.

6. **To what extent do you believe you have the skills and ability to have a positive effect on student performance and achievement?**

Score means Group A = 8 9, Group B = 7 7 For the area of skills and ability to have a positive effect on student performance and achievement Group A rated themselves as very strong influence Group B rated themselves at a strong influence A *t* test comparison found a significant difference between the group statements at a 05 alpha Group A believes they possess the skills and abilities to have a significantly greater impact on student performance than Group B Groups A's composite score of 8 9 was 1 1 greater than Group B on the 10 point scale The most frequent score of group A was 9 compared to Group B's most frequent score of 8

Code: Skill: Abilities

Participant responses

"This is hard to answer - I have more trouble the bigger the classes are I am confident in my ABILITIES in general - but I'm much more effective one-on-one with the students or with a small group of them."

"The master's program was very challenging for me It forced me to learn a lot about how I work best, how I interact with others, how I handle stress, etc Personally, I know myself, my capABILITIES, and my limitations better as a result of the program Professionally, the program challenged me to think of what I would consider to be the ideal educator Every day I work to grow closer to my ideal."

"My development occurred in a Christian atmosphere from my home to school to community which I think is shaped my overall manner of how I relate to people I also try to model SKILLS and ABILITIES of a teacher who influenced me along the way Along with the fact that I try to put myself in a teenagers shoes - How would I like to be treated?"

Finds in 9 out of 20 online documents, = 45%

7. **To what extent do you believe your support structures have been a contributing factor to your teaching success?**

Score means Group A = 8 8, Group B = 8 0 Group A & B rated support structures as having a very strong influence Group A believes that support structures have been more of a contributing factor to their teaching success, than Group B Groups A's composite score of 8 8

** Indicates the number of respondents responding (a whole number and percentage) to the question and how many responded.

was 8 greater than Group B. The median score for Group A was 10 compared to Group B's score of 8. Although there is not a significant difference between mean scores, Group A clearly felt more support.

Code: Mentor; Support Structures

Participant responses:

"The support of my MAT peers, professors, MENTOR teachers, and principal were/are invaluable to any success I had/have. Without the support structure I probably would have never had the desire, courage, or ability to progress to this point. This year, my fourth as a teacher, my support structure has lessened, and I am feeling less competent and successful."

"By nature I like to bounce ideas off people and get their feedback. Community living, access to Portland and ND professors, and MENTOR teachers were instrumental in my success. They all offered fresh ideas and an objectivity which I could never bring to the table alone."

"Especially in my (?) career, the constructive criticism, the ability to return to the classroom after teaching in one, and the availability of educational MENTORs was crucial. However, of late, as these support structures have naturally eroded, more of the motivation has had to be internal - a drive to succeed."

++ Finds in 8 out of 20 online documents, = 40%

Chart of Raw Scores by Individual

First Name	Public Persona	Growth Personal & Prof	Concept of Learning	Self Contribution	Skills from MAT	Have Skill & Ability	Support Structures	Total Scores
Blue1	7	10	8	8	8	8	10	= 59
Blue2	8	9	8	8	8	10	10	= 61
Blue3	6	8	8	8	6	8	8	= 52
Blue4	8	7	10	10	6	10	10	= 61
Blue5	8	9	9	8	8	9	10	= 61
Blue6	8	7	8	8	5	8	6	= 50
Blue7	7	8	10	6	8	9	7	= 55
Blue8	3	9	8	10	8	10	10	= 58
Blue9	7	9	7	10	8	8	9	= 58
Blue10	7	9	9	5	8	9	7	= 54
Blue11	7	9	8	9	8	9	10	= 60
Org1	7	10	7	6	8	8	7	= 53
Org2	8	10	8	7	8	8	6	= 55
Org3	10	9	9	8	8	10	8	= 62
Org4	6	9	9	6	8	8	3	= 49
Org5	7	9	8	7	8	8	7	= 54
Org6	8	8	9	8	8	8	8	= 57
Org7	7	10	8	9	8	8	6	= 56

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Group Composite (Mean) Scores by Question

Group A	*N = 11*						
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7
Mean	6.909	8.545	8.454	8.181	7.363	8.909	8.818
Median	7	9	8	8	8	9	10
Mode	7	9	8	8	8	8	10
Standard Deviation	1.445	0.934	0.934	1.601	1.12	0.831	1.537
Range	5	3	3	5	3	2	4
Minimum	3	7	7	5	5	8	6
Maximum	8	10	10	10	8	10	10

Group B	*N = 9*						
Mean	6.888	8.888	7.555	8.333	7	7.888	8
Median	8	9	8	9	7	8	8
Mode	8	10	8	9	6	8	9
Standard Deviation	1.691	1.054	0.881	1.732	1.118	1.166	1.118
Range	5	3	3	6	3	4	3
Minimum	3	7	6	4	6	6	6
Maximum	8	10	9	10	9	10	9

Pattern Summeries

1. Public Persona

Most frequently identified experiences referred to the formative, early-on teaching immersion experiences or on-the-job *training*. Responses identified training as *real world*, a demanding, consistent and formidable role. Previous experiences were identified as especially significant although to a lesser degree: a) secondary and college activities including public speaking, debate, and other leadership roles, and, b) the training provided during the program including courses, skill development, feedback, and modeling. Those attributes identified were confidence and self-assuredness. A few have had extended experiences in school leadership roles since leaving the program (e.g., head of dept.) and conducting professional development experiences for peers. These continue to develop their *public persona*.

2. Professional and Personal Growth - Transformational Learning

Most of the growth expressed occurred in the domain of transformational learning: learning from experiences to identify one's strengths, weaknesses, challenges, capabilities, limitations, and levels of satisfaction from teaching. The *struggle* emerged over and over again as one that was necessary in order to grow. Support came from combinations of the direct experience

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of teaching, the ACE community of which subject was a part, and from the professional relationships developed with experienced teachers in subjects schools. What is interesting is the *personal journey of self* that, no matter what support is available, is necessary. Limited delineation between the *personal* and *professional* dimensions of self.

3. Challenges about Learning

Most recurring responses related to acquired understanding/empathy for learning style differences and the need to use a variety of teaching techniques (e.g., cooperative learning, experiential learning, technology, etc.). Several responses related to subjects growing awareness and empathy for students who struggle and/or become frustrated with learning. Related to this is the need to help students *grasp and engage* in learning, the recognition of socio-cultural issues that interfere with learning and the self-discovery, on the part of the student, that begins to define learning.

4. Power of Self Confidence.

There was strong convergence around the need to recognize that self-confidence is *vital* to effective teaching (e.g. having high standards, to be self-accountable, and self-critical lead to self-confidence.) Feedback and encouragement from others is important as well as an enduring belief in self, not necessarily in one's exceptional abilities, but the recognition that one is doing the best he/she can do and an intrinsic respect for students. Time on the job enhances self-confidence but in most cases, pre-existing ego strength (to some extent) is necessary. This is developed in many ways knowing that there are tools and people support out there, one's upbringing, etc.

Self-confidence emerged as a sense of positive self, related *carrying of the self* or acting in self-confident ways (a. healthy self-concept, b. trust in self, c. belief in self, d. self-awareness and valuing of intent, e. ability to move from coping to transcending the one's present position).

5. Skill Acquisition through On-the-job Teaching.

While a combination of both formal skill acquisition which occurred in classes was recognized as valuable in all but two cases, there was general consensus that the experience of teaching (e.g., application of knowledge, transformative learning) was the most valuable part of the ACE experience. Three respondents recognized the sense of empowerment spurred by initial teaching of skills in classes and their own *achievement motivation* to go beyond as lifelong

learners and engage in self-reflection and inquiry. It is evident that *time at the job* is enhancing learning.

While formal, in-course work is valuable yet limited, application or contextual learning makes the professional!!

6. Relationship between Teacher Influence and Student Achievement.

Most respondents agreed that they are able to influence student achievement through motivational techniques, positive modeling behaviors, and high expectations. Classroom management was identified by three as getting in the way of how some would have liked to influence students. Two modified their positive responses by identifying the higher influencing role of parents and formative experiences in schools, in other words recognizing more powerful influences.

7. Acknowledgment of Support Structure.

The support of mentors, peers, and instructors were most commonly acknowledged. However, the influence of the peer group, living in the ACE community and the interactions with peers, stood out. The positive school environment that included the support of mentors and teaching staff was identified and when it was missing, this, too, was recognized as a deficit to the support of these novices. Confirming the value of collegiality, especially with the novice, and highlighting the *unique dimensions* of the ACE experience in terms of living in community and having formal mentor teachers as supports.

8. Achievement motivation

Self-determination, never giving up, commitment to succeeding all form a cluster that can be identified as achievement motivation. An inner drive and strong will contributed to forcing approximately half of the group on. Inner drive being connected to and identified as spirituality and love of humanity as key supports to their development. Responses represented a wide range of influences including instructional skills, teaching load, organizational skills, family/parents, and parents of students.

9. Idealism - Realism

Tempering idealism with the acquisition of more realistic expectations, without sacrificing high expectations and standards. Responses here converge around this major the fact that teachers are not magicians, saviours, etc. It is the realization that there is a long-range reward out there

but not instantly perceived. Focus was on the mutuality of the teacher student-relationship and the *servant* dimension of teaching, and the *parameters* that exist concerning the temporal nature of the relationship. It is the issue of high expectations and one's goals and, at the same time, being somewhat anchored with what is realistic to expect. Commonly expressed as maturity based on realistic expectations and what one can expect as a result of investment of the self.

10. Beliefs of good teachers.

- about children: all children can learn and deserve the best
- about teaching and learning: active learners; teachers as facilitators; discovery learning; recognize individual learning styles/differences
- about collaborative relationships: importance of parent and collegial partnerships
- about teachers attributes: genuineness, belief in goodness of students; use humor,
- about teaching skills: providing feedback; being consistent;
- teachers are lifelong learners; open and inquiring learners.

"Good teachers believe that their students are good, in fact great! They believe in opening the doors of opportunity to all, not some! We believe in tireless devotion and dedication to our children! We try to find that light switch in all students to turn them on to something!

11. Recognition of the value, the demand, the high standards (requirement) and the complexity of teaching as a profession.

Teachers need to be held with the highest standards of any profession, the deadwood currently floating around needs to be excised.

- teaching is one of the most difficult and demanding professions; it is also one of the most rewarding
- education and teaching cannot be divorced from religion; education, in the long haul, requires an appeal to God, within this is a good answer to the question, Why learn? Does not exist.

12. The value of providing and modeling respect, unconditional belief, honesty, and love for students which results in enhanced self-concept and confidence.

A second cluster acknowledged the influence of a teacher, the need to believe in oneself in spite of odds, believing that one can make a difference, albeit with one student. For example: ...the most gratifying lesson I learned as a teacher was this: amongst all the hard work, the long days, the bad days, the frustration and stress, the late hours and early mornings within all this, there are good, no, great days and that it can work! Students can and do learn and grow. And when that happens, if only to one student a year, then all of the struggles fade for you have changed the life of another. Other responses value the hard work and organization that is vital to effective teaching and a final response acknowledging the value of extemporaneous lessons in contrast to those that are tightly-structured and scripted.

General observation. Responses are possibly a beginning theory-of-action (Argyris & Schon, 1987) in which connections are being made between actions/activities and congruency with value base.

From Patterns to Custers

> *Teaching is not about instant gratification but about planting seeds and having faith that they will take root.*
>
> ACE teacher, Charlotte

Four major clusters emerged from analyzing the pattern responses. Analysis found an inter-connectedness in the patterns and an integrative understanding of the growth of the whole person(s) during their two-year professional experience. Unlike most novices, these ACE interns did not enter work abruptly with minimal support nor did they experience the typical isolation that is characteristic of our profession. Reflection and professional dialogue, joint learning and the recognition that improving any one of their teaching was a collective task were natural expectations to them from the onset of their experiences. They *became* learning communities. Their experience was unique. Just how unique is illustrated in the Clusters that follow.

Cluster 1: A Learning Frame of Mind or The Right Stuff

This cluster is grounded in a fundamental sense of self: self-determination (a strong will and level of high expectations), self-confidence (a strong belief in self), and commitment of self to serving humanity as God's agent (spirituality). These, in part, provided interns with the sense of resiliency that was necessary to face the challenges of teaching. Over half the group of respondents expressed, for example, a distinct unwillingness to compromise–to resist settling for "good enough" and an inner drive to continually strive for better. Examples of this can be captured in the following simple but profound response: "I continually refused to accept anything except my best efforts in the classroom."

Interns, for the most part, possessed a healthy self-concept (trusting and believing in the self) and the accompanying ego-strength necessary to move from a state of coping with initial student teaching challenges to one of transcendence–toward becoming a reflective and effective teacher.

Responses indicated that they had a range of prior learning experiences in which they were able to become self-directed and responsible self-starters. These occurred, for the most part, in family environments as well as in early schooling experiences. Some cited experiences in public speaking, debate and other student leadership roles. Others identified the training provided through courses which helped to develop skills, provide feedback, and present modeling of effective teaching. Through these experiences, they learned to be initiating, communicative, and introspective, as well as being responsive to the needs of others. Despite the self-doubts, frustrations, compromises, and setbacks, these interns consequently were able to retain their high standards, sense of self-accountability, and the need to be self-critical. The self-drive to "never give up" and achieve was pervasive and persistent in responses concerning

The classroom, then, became a forum in which these attributes and values could play themselves out. Interns recognized the journey of self and the frustrations and struggles that accompanies it but had the strength and a "no-excuse" responsibility to confront these challenges. Given the confidence and self-determination, the experiences of these interns

became the laboratory for learning. They were able to value more their experiences and be open to reflecting and examining them, interpreting new meaning from them, and engage in building their mental models. Without the inner strength and conviction, we suspect, their level of success would have been compromised.

Cluster 2: The Learning Community: Sources of Support

ACE interns found themselves in several learning communities: ACE living communities, their respective school communities, the community of the classroom, the diocese communities, and the community of interns and instructors from both collaborating universities throughout their two-year experiences. Of the various communities of support experienced by ACE interns, ranked most significantly was the creation of their on-site living communities developed among all interns who were placed at various sites across the Southeast–living together in community and teaching in the same diocese. There is strong consensus that the sense of caring, belonging, and collective meaning of experiences that the ACE interns experienced in these communities was fundamental to their development as a professionals and, we suspect, influential as they become adult lifelong learners.

As they entered their internship, ACE members experienced a broad spectrum of acculturation challenges: moving to a strange city, entering the context of the school, assuming the new role of teacher, confronting teaching responsibilities with minimal pre-service experiences, being perceived by a new set of colleagues as a "qualified" teacher, building a social life, and becoming a contributing and collaborative member of their peer community. Most admit that the development of the mutually respecting, interdependent, and solid relationships was essential to their self-development both along personal, as well as professional dimensions of support and growth. Indeed without the support and nurturance that came from their peers, many admit that they would not have experienced the success they did, no less remain in their professional roles during their internship.

These were communities in which it was safe to be oneself, in which group reflection and examination, the testing of assumptions, and new meanings became cultural norms. Without

the support and nurturance that came from their peers, many admit that they would not have experienced the success they did, no less remain in their professional roles during their internship.

Perhaps this is one of the uniquenesses of the ACE experience–the extent to which the richness of living in community has been taken to its broadest level. It represents the establishment of a "total" community in which novices live out both their personal and professional development with trusting and open colleagues. It marks the creation of a community that is safe with a shared purpose and intentions to create new meaning, where one can grow based on the nurturance of trusted friends.

Some exemplary responses capture the interns' perceived value of these experiences as follows:

"...Living with people who can relate to what you go through on a daily basis is a wonderful support," and "...To have individuals who are there to listen helps you grow stronger. Many decisions I struggle with are answered with the help of others."

Support provided by mentor teachers and other teachers in schools in which interns taught was identified as another key influence in the professional development of interns. Mentors, for example, were perceived as helping a great deal in their ability to answer a range of questions, ranging from ones addressing school routine and expectations to instructional challenges experienced in classrooms. A related community of which they were a part was that which a few diocese initiated. Some diocese administrators provided special "checking in" support to determine adequacy of housing accommodations, access to resources, access, and, in general, the well-being of groups. Finally, access to the professors representing both universities was acknowledged as a contributory factor to the success of the interns. In a sense this was a unique community in terms of communications which ranged from periodic telementoring to on-site observations and feedback. States one intern: "...They all offered fresh ideas and an objectivity which I could never bring to the table alone." Another acknowledges: "They [various professors] taught me to challenge myself as well as my students. I do not think I would have success in my job if I did not love what I did everyday. And part of the reason I

love what I do is because of the style I do it in." These multiple support bases provided the interns a rich and unique environment to test their understandings, try out instructional strategies, and refine their approaches through the richness of dialogue and collegial conversations both formal and informal–in short, to professionally develop.

Cluster 3: From the Learner's Frame of Reference

Interns, for the most part, believed that they could influence the achievement of students through effectively motivating, making a topic relevant, and being a positive learner- role model. Several admitted that influence of this nature is developmental and that it required the two-year time frame to master these skills. One teacher states, however, that this can be accomplished by the "...simple message that I give my students, 'I believe in you' and to ask them to expect their 'personal best' from themselves." Most viewed teaching as a unique opportunity to influence students. Stated clearly by one secondary teacher: "...Teachers are among a select few individuals in students' lives who will be given a chance to motivate, to instruct, and to inspire each student. My students will enter the school year open to being motivated or inspired and it is how the teacher performs from then on that will be important." There were no responses that questioned students' abilities to learn or that expressed low expectations. In contrast, statements like the following characterize the positive attitudes of these teachers: "Every kid wants to learn." "Every kid deserves the best." "Every kid is basically." "Kids are gifts and need encouragement." "Having a true belief in your own self-worth and conveying that belief to your student enables them to cultivate those same beliefs in themselves." Despite the challenges and frustrations, then, the implicit belief in their students--the recognition that students are our most important resources and that they deserve the best--sustained the enthusiasm and commitment of these teachers throughout their two-year experience.

Interns were asked to identify perceptions concerning teaching and learning–a look at the pedagogical aspect of their roles. The two dimensions identified as most important in this area were related to the need to identify and empathetically understand individual learning style differences and to use a variety of teaching techniques (e.g., cooperative learning, experiential

activities, etc.). In many instances, the importance of individual learning styles was simply not recognized and/or not valued during formal instruction as being as a critical factor until interns entered the classroom. Some struggled with the challenge of helping students engage and grasp learning, to take ownership of their performance, and to increase their desire to learn. Interestingly, issues of classroom management, discipline, and self-control were seldom identified as major issues; rather issues like responsibility for one's learning and increasing the desire to learn were. Significantly, then, these teachers were able to move beyond concerning themselves with teaching and began to focus more on learning and the role of the learner.

Cluster 4: The Emerging Professional

ACE interns, for reasons cited earlier about living in community, had a unique advantage that most teachers crave–the opportunity of "living" collegiality with peers. Exchanges about practice, about instructional strategies, about curriculum development, and in navigating teacher-student relationships were commonplace in their daily evening and weekend interactions. This researcher recalls a visit to the Charleston community in which a nightly practices was for the four interns to sit around their dining room table in the converted rectory swapping ideas around lesson planning, about grading homework, and special-case students. The special bonding provided each of them with a unique and empathic understanding of each other's journey which was reciprocal and resulted in a reinforced belief in self and self-assuredness. Attests one intern: "...the camaraderie among us rookie teachers is the kind of healthy bond that needs to be experienced by all new teachers."

Consequently, reflection and continual refinement of practice were hallmarks of the initial stages of development for most interns. In most cases, they moved from an initial state of idealism in which perhaps the complexities of teaching were less than realized, in which students' levels of engagement and willingness to learn were naively to be expected, and that classrooms would automatically become harmonious and stimulating places of learning. Students, during training, were viewed as "classes" rather than groups of unique individual with special talents, skills, and needs. Part of this was due to the interns' prior experience as students in both secondary schools and the university. Learning, for most of them, was not a

struggle, achievement was expected and realized. This frame of reference, in some ways, impacted their expectations as first year teachers. Struggles with classroom management issues, challenges with implementing active learning strategies, and issues of curriculum design resulted in new insight into the craft and the role of teacher. Mastering technique and carrying it off with ease and effectiveness was difficult. It did, however, result in the recognition and valuing of the role of teacher as facilitator of learning, the importance of discovery learning, and the need to address individual differences in the classroom.

A major learning emerged during this initial stage of development–a tempering of initial idealism about teaching and learning with more realistic expectations about what to expect as a teacher, the need to be gentle but firm in interactions with students, and the essentiality of treating each student as a unique individual. Notes one intern: "...I learned that teachers are not magicians or saviors..." Or the realization on the part of another: "The most difficult lesson I have learned that you can't be all things to all people. No matter how hard I try, it is impossible to be everything that everyone needs me to be. I have to determine what is humanly possible and go from there. It is sometimes difficult to say no to people and to set boundaries for myself. It is necessary to look at the whole picture sometimes and do what is best for every. This is hard but necessary to do." Further insight is revealed on the part of another: "...each student is an individual, unable to be grouped into a specific category, with a story to tell. As a teacher, it is my job to first listen to that story and then to the best of my abilities, revolve the child's education around their own story, make them feel that you are telling a story and they are the main character. ...No matter race, gender, or economic background, all adolescents need adults in their lives who will include then, and for some, school is the only place where that can happen."

Perhaps most significant was the re-valuing of teaching as a profession, the need to maintain high standards for entry into the profession, and the importance of moral connection between teaching and spirituality, for many pointed out the "servant" dimension of teaching. One intern acknowledges: "...teachers need to be held with the highest standards of any profession, the deadwood currently floating around needs to be excised." Another observes: "Teaching is one

of the most difficult and demanding professions, it is also one of the most rewarding. A third intern reflects: " Good teachers believe that deep down every child wants to learn, wants to be accepted, wants to achieve. A good teacher believes that he/she can make a difference and does!" A more philosophical stance: "Education and teaching cannot be divorced from religion; education, in the long haul, requires an appeal to God; within this is a good answer to the question, 'why learn?' does not exist."

A final indicator of the emergence of professionalism among the ACE interns was the development of a belief and value system that developed out of their reflection on practice–an emerging theory-of-action. The major pattern of responses clustered around concerns of the essential ingredients of being an effective teacher included the attributes of providing and modeling respect, holding an unconditional belief for youth, demonstrating honesty in all situations, and possessing a genuine love for one's students. It was acknowledged by many that these attributes lead to enhanced self-concept and self-confidence for students.

A second pattern cluster acknowledged the powerful influence of a teacher, the need for teachers to believe in themselves in spite of odds, and that teachers can make a difference, albeit with one student. Affirms one intern: "... the most gratifying lesson I learned as a teachers was this–amongst all the hard work, the long days, the bad days, the frustration and stress, the late hours and early mornings–within all this, there are good, no, great days and that it can work! Students can and do learn and grow. And when that happens, if only to one student a year, then all of the struggles fade for you. For you have changed the life of another!"

Conclusions

This study had three main goals. They were:

1. To determine what effect an alternative teacher preparation program had on participants' attitudes and beliefs in relation to the personal attributes and characteristics the participants possessed when they were admitted to the program.

2. To determine the programmatic features that interns found were the most influential in contributing to their success as teachers.
3. To determine the effect field support structures had on those intern teachers who responded to our survey.

Goal 1

Consistent with action research methodology (Bogdan, Biklen,1992; Miles & Huberman, 1994)), a series of patterns and clusters emerged from the triangulated approach to data analysis. These patterns and clusters were translated as learnings that support our contention that the ACE alternative teacher preparation program had a profound and positive impact on participants' attitudes and beliefs. The unique professional experience of living-learning in communities enabled exceptional and unique peer and collegial relationships to develop. The sharing of daily teaching experiences, the "communal" building of lesson plans and units, and the positive problem-solving peer dialogues during evening hours and weekends resulted in positive socio-emotional development of these young professionals. This is in stark contrast to the initial career experiences of most professionals that is characterized by isolation, trial and error, and lack of peer support (Lieberman, 1988; Darling-Hammond, 1989; Maeroff, 1988; Sergiovanni, 1993). Further, a relationship was found between the personal attributes and characteristics the participants possessed and the structures and experiences provided to interns. Although the program did not "make" or "create" a persona, it significantly influenced it. To many it was the "nature" of teaching that developed the public persona. Skills and abilities were influenced by program structures. Views were broadened, changed, and expanded. A sense of self immerged, self confidence grow stronger, and skills were developed and enhanced.

Goal 2

In the area of programmatic features that interns found most influential in contributing to their success as teachers, interns noted exposure to research, techniques based on effective practice, and instructor modeling. A key feature was the "sharpening" of the skills and characteristic the intern possessed. The program challenged interns academically and personally. Interns had to look within, to reflect, and to assess outwardly. What does a good educator look like and what does the learner need from the teacher.

Interns valued the summer course work experiences for the acquisition of Best Practice strategies and techniques that were classroom focused, practical in nature, and easy to implement. Further, they valued the modeling of effective teaching by certain instructors. Consistent with research findings on modeling, those instructors who chose to model announced prior to teaching episodes those behaviors and techniques that were to be used, called attention to them during use, and then facilitated a debriefing session to assess their teaching effectiveness. In cases in which team teaching occurred, instructors would assume peer critiquing roles to demonstrate certain techniques and behaviors (Showers 1985). Care was taken to include succinct connections with theoretical bases but the emphasis of the information was classroom delivery (Fullan, 1993; Miles, 1981).

Goal 3

The last goal of our study was the effect field support structures had on those intern teachers who responded to our survey. Interns identified the special guidance and support provided by school administrators, mentors, and University supervisors provided as invaluable. The process provided interns weekly dialogues, frequent observations and feedback sessions, some demonstration teaching, and general socio-emotional support. These structures also provided the "intern professionals' support in their "rites of passage." (Maeroff, 1988)

Mentor structures provided feedback, motivation, and objectivity. The teacher-mentor complemented the administrative support and provided yet another special peer relationship to be formed. When face to face contact was not possible, telementoring contributed to weekly personal dialogues between interns and their mentor-instructors who were based at the degree-sponsoring University. Overall, mentor-instructors used a coaching and problem-based adult learning model (Showers, 1985).

Importance of Study:

As teacher education faculty search for efficacious curriculum and methods to prepare per-service teachers for their first year of teaching, we can and have learned from our participating in an alternative program and from our students interns. Teaching and learning is not a subject specific, isolated event. Subjects, topics, skill development and enhancement, and all the other aspects of becoming an effective teacher are interrelated. Support structure are imperatives for not only the development of new teachers, but for the retention of teachers.

Modeling is a must within the our profession and between professionals. Current programs need to take a closer look at what they are providing and compare their outcomes with known successes.

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Appendix A

The Principals and Supervisors used the following rating scale to make a subjective judgement about teacher effectiveness in classroom management, student-teacher interactions, and students' active engagement in learning.

We rated those teachers who had predominant (and in most cases, unanimous) ratings in the following three categories as "effective teachers".

Exemplary – Few issues, no major concerns because teacher recognizes these issues and has already taken steps to implement changes.

Very Good – Some issues, teacher recognizes issues and is attempting to implement changes.

Good – Some issues, teacher recognizes issues and is planning to make changes.

We rated those teachers who had predominant (and in most cases, unanimous) ratings in the following two categories as "less effective teachers".

Average – Major issues, teacher needs assistance in recognizing and responding to these issues.

Needs Improvement – Major issues, teacher does not recognize issues and/or resists to reflect upon possible changes.